

# Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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Saturday, July 8, 2006

## Private Keanu

In our interview with Keanu Reeves last year, the man appeared shy, uncomfortable with media scrutiny despite many years in the industry, and very private. He still is.

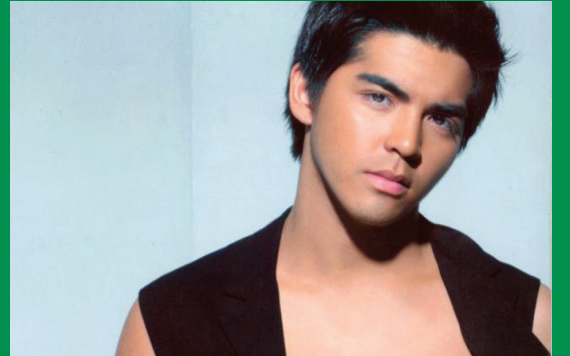
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## Family Man

Of all his accomplishments since he joined show biz three years ago, actor Mark Herras is proudest of having built a home for his family.

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# 6 linked to '03 mutiny arrested



## RAGE AGAINST RAPE

An alleged Filipino comfort woman or Japanese sex slaves during World War II holds her placard as she joins the rally against the four US Marines accused of raping a Filipino woman Thursday, July 6, 2006 in Manila's financial district of Makati. The alleged rape victim given the name Nicole by the court to protect her identified US Marines Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith as the one who allegedly raped her. See related story on Page 4

By OLIVER TEVES  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippine military said it stymied fresh plots to destabilize the country with the arrests Friday of six fugitive officers linked to a 2003 failed mutiny against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Police and military intelligence agents captured the six men in a dawn raid, seizing explosives and weapons.

"With the arrest of these officers, we believe we have prevented possible conduct of terrorist actions ... to desta-

bilize the government," military Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga told a news conference at army headquarters.

The arrests came in the wake of an alleged coup plot in February that Arroyo blamed on military adventurers, communist rebels and their political backers, and which prompted her to declare a weeklong state of emergency.

"Today a big blow to the said adventurism was delivered by joint elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police," Senga said.

6 LINKED Page 2

## Palace, DoJ get low ratings in SWS survey on corruption

By CYRIL BONABENTE  
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Compared to last year, more business managers believe that key government agencies are insincere in fighting corruption, but a declining number of them claim that their companies give bribes to win public sector contracts, the latest

Social Weather Stations survey shows.

The 2006 Survey of Enterprises on Corruption reveals that 14 out of 23 agencies got lower ratings for their sincerity in fighting corruption in 2006 than in 2005.

The Department of Justice (DoJ) suffered the largest drop (33 points) from

PALACE Page 2

## ABNER VENUS

### Dynamic Abner at Micro Games

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

"It's an experience of a lifetime," says Abner Venus of his experience at the recently concluded 6th Micronesian Games.

Venus, whose family hails from Iloilo City, distinguished himself in the regional sports competition

DYNAMIC Page 2



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# PINOYNEWS

## 6 LINKED

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier this week, ABS-CBN television showed a videotaped message from one of the alleged coup plotters, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, who has been in detention since February. He said he was withdrawing support from Arroyo over alleged corrup-

## PALACE

FROM PAGE 1

+13 to -20. It was followed by the Office of the President, whose rating plunged 25 points from +10 to -15.

Interestingly, Church officials got the highest sincerity rating.

The score of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, which was criticized recently for trying to reach a compromise deal with the Marcoses, dropped 18 points from +5 to -13.

The net ratings were based on interviews with managers of 700 small- to large-scale enterprises in Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, Metro Davao, Cavite-Laguna-Batangas, and Cagayan de Oro-Iligan.

SWS conducted face-to-face interviews from Feb. 18 to April 27 -- a period covering the declaration of a state of national

tion and called her a "bogus" president.

Lim headed the elite army Scout Rangers, many of whose officers were involved in the 2003 mutiny. The tape was made in February, but on Thursday, ABS-CBN reported that a military rebel group had renewed support for Lim.

The fugitive officers, along with a lawyer and another

emergency by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and the subsequent arrest of some of her critics.

## Customs lowest

The Bureau of Customs received the lowest sincerity rating (-74).

Others with very low scores are the Department of Public Works and Highways (-66), Commission on Elections (-59), Bureau of Internal Revenue (-58), and the House of Representatives (-40).

Except for the Commission on Elections, which was included in the survey for the first time this year, the bottom dwellers have consistently received negative marks since 2000.

## Church rating

Local Church leaders received a rating of +71, followed by the Supreme Court (+40), Social Security System (+38), Department

civilian, were seized from a house in suburban Quezon city following a dawn raid, the military said.

Senga said the raiders recovered explosives, including C-4, high-powered firearms, ammunition, military uniforms, cell phones, documents and laptop computers.

Job Alboroto, a local security officer at the residential

of Health (+26) and city and municipal governments (+22).

The survey shows that solicitations for bribes last year were most rampant during transactions for local government permits and licenses, with 33 percent of the managers saying they have experienced it.

Twenty-nine percent said government employees had asked for bribes to facilitate the issuance of national permits and licenses. The same percentage of managers had been asked for bribes while paying income taxes.

Enterprises, however, rarely report the offense to authorities, according to SWS.

The percentage of managers admitting their companies give bribes to win public sector contracts declined in Metro Manila (from 52 percent the previous year to 46 percent), Metro Cebu (54 to 47 percent), Metro Davao (57 to 49 percent), and Cagayan de Oro-Iligan (65 to 38 percent).

area, said one of the officers was injured when he tried to escape by jumping from a second-floor window.

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said three of the officers arrested Friday had escaped from military detention in January.

Young officers, mostly captains and lieutenants from elite special forces units, led about

300 soldiers who occupied a ritzy hotel and a nearby shopping mall in Manila's Makati financial district on July 27, 2003. They demanded the resignation of Arroyo and other officials, claiming her government and the military were corrupt. They surrendered after a 19-hour standoff.

The government has charged 30 officers and two

enlisted men with staging a coup in a civilian court and 66 others have been undergoing military trial for mutiny, disobedience and other offenses, said Roberto Pulido, a lawyer for some of the accused.

A civilian fact-finding commission concluded the mutiny was part of a larger plot to seize power and appoint a 15-member junta.

**The survey shows that solicitations for bribes last year were most rampant during transactions for local government permits and licenses, with 33 percent of the managers saying they have experienced it. Enterprises, however, rarely report the offense to authorities, according to SWS.**

The percentage in Cavite-Laguna-Batangas remained at 47 percent.

## Receipts

As for the businesses' own practices, only 37 percent of the managers said companies in their sector were issuing receipts, while 51 percent said the companies always demand receipts.

Only 20 percent said the com-

panies in their sector paid taxes honestly.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points for the Metro Manila sample, plus or minus 10 percentage points for Metro Cebu and Metro Davao, and plus or minus 11 percentage points for Cavite-Laguna-Batangas, and Cagayan de Oro-Iligan. It measured corruption

It measured corruption based on the perceptions and actual experiences of the business executives.

The survey was funded by the Asia Foundation, using resources given by the United States Agency for International Development. It was undertaken in partnership with the Makati Business Club.

## DYNAMIC

FROM PAGE 1

as "a very effective" basketball tournament director during the 10-day event.

Venus, the only known Filipino who was given such a responsibility in the Games, handled the job like a pro, meeting the demands of the players, coaches, volunteers, as well as the media and the public—although it was his first time to do it.

From hauling ice to the freezers early in the morning, refilling the players' water jugs constantly, to coordinating with concerned groups and people, and providing the media and the public with the latest games statistics, Venus managed it all well.

His secret to a well-organized system: "I did my homework ahead of time."

Venus said that, as soon as he got the confirmation of the Games' hosting on Saipan, he immediately coordinated with the Federation of International Basketball Associations for must-do things.

Through these efforts, the Micronesian Games' basketball got coverage in FIBA's website.

"It was also the first time in history for the games to be in cyber sports, which gives a play-by-play account. You can see the results immediately after each game. The results are available online," he said in an interview.

Venus said that he got a lot of positive feedback from the media, which had no difficulty findings results about

the basketball games

"They [media] said it was very easy and quick to find results from us. I really made sure that we deliver promptly. We have volunteers here who are doing that. We don't want to delay anything that we do," he said.

During the Micronesian Games itself, Venus dealt with eight competing men's teams and five rival women's teams.

Men's basketball teams came from Guam, Palau, Pohnpei, Yap, Marshall Islands, Chuuk, Kosrae, and the home team CNMI, which lost in the games.

"That's something that made me feel sad. They only lost once but they got displaced for the medal. But this is sports, and we have rules to follow," he said.

The CNMI lost in its faceoff with Kosrae, which qualified for silver, displacing the home team in their bracket. FIBA ruling provides that whoever makes the first three wins in each bracket qualifies for the medals.

The women's groups were from Palau, Pohnpei, Yap, Chuuk, and the CNMI. The CNMI women's basketball won the gold over Chuuk.

The basketball games had 40 volunteers, including youth basketball leaders Joe Diaz and George Cruz, who worked directly with Venus.

Filipino organizations also helped him in the cleanup in and around the Marianas High School gym during the event. They included the CNMI Power, Movers, MDX Radio Club, and the United Filipino Organization. These groups had also volunteered to paint the Ada gym and

its parking before the event.

## Passion

Venus has remained passionate about the game. "It's my interest ever since I was a kid," he said.

Venus has lived on Saipan since he was 11 years old in 1975. He went to Mount Carmel, where he starred in the school's basketball team.

His other interest was trumpet, which landed him and the rest of the Mount Carmel School Band in Guam the last time Pope John Paul II visited the U.S. territory.

Venus went to the university of the East for college, and joined the school's varsity team. He would eventually be one of the last cuts of a team that won the last two championship of the University Athletic Association of the Philippines.

During this time, he also met and befriended 6'6" future Philippine Basketball Association star Jerry Codiñera, who recommended him to the weightlifting coach. He did pretty well representing his school in weightlifting for about three years.

After completing his B.S. Management degree from UE, Venus immediately flew back home to Saipan.

He currently works as manager for the service and body shop departments of Microl Corp.

He took a leave from work last month to volunteer for the Micro Games.

Venus is also active in the Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, where he has been a board member since 1995.

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# Fitial's utility consultant is ex-Napocor president

By **AGNES E. DONATO**  
REPORTER

A former president of the Philippines' National Power Corp. is serving as consultant to the Fitial administration on utility matters.

Guido Alfredo A. Delgado, currently president and chief

executive officer of the G.A.A. Delgado Inc. management and investments consultancy firm, was hired by the CNMI government to help with the troubled Commonwealth Utilities Corp.

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial has known Delgado since his private sector days, according to press secretary Charles P. Reyes Jr.

"The governor has a lot of confidence in Guido because of his extensive background. Guido has experience in much larger situation. He's very intelligent and he has a firm grasp of utility issues," Reyes said.

Delgado has made several trips to Saipan to meet with CUC officials and to evaluate

the power plant situation. He has also accompanied Fitial in the governor's meetings with officials of Napocor and Philippines-based private companies interested in assisting CUC. He is involved in the proposed transfer of surplus power generators from the Philippines to Saipan. Furthermore, Delgado is helping the Commonwealth with the CUC privatization plan.

"He's involved with both the short term solution, which is stabilizing the current power situation, and the permanent solution, which is the transition to a privatized utility," Reyes said.

Delgado took over Napocor in 1994, at a young age of 34, and held the position until 1998. He also sat on the board of directors of Napocor and National

Electrification Administration during the four-year period.

Besides running his own consulting firm, Delgado also serves as chairman of Philippine Power Distributors Investments Corporation, the first and only company in the country engaged primarily in management and investment services in the power distribution sector.

His numerous other roles in the private sector include chairman of Worldwater Philippines, Inc., a subsidiary of the Worldwater Corporation USA solar water management company; and chairman of RISE Foundation, a venture capital company based in Mindanao, Philippines with focus on small and medium enterprise.

Delgado is also involved with the First Dominion Prime Hold-

ings Inc., the largest tuna canning and exporting company in the Philippines until the year 2000; Microenterprise Bank; Fuego Hotels & Properties Management Corp., a hotel and hospitality management company; A Brown Company, Inc., a publicly-listed company engaged in property development and investment and trading of goods like petroleum products; and PAREF Northfield School for Boys.

Delgado graduated cum laude from the University of the Philippines with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Business and completed his Masters Degree in Management Science (Finance) from the University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology in the United Kingdom.

## Brion sworn in as DOLE secretary

By **MARCONI CALINDAS**  
REPORTER

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office wants every overseas Filipino worker in the CNMI to know that there is a new Department of Labor and Employment secretary in the Philippines.

POLO Labor Representative Joanne Lourdes Lavilla informed the Saipan Tribune that Arturo D. Brion is the new DOLE secretary. Brion recently took his oath of office before Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The oath-taking ceremony was held simultaneously with the opening of the "Jobs and Livelihood Fair for Soldiers with Disability" and their de-

pendents Thursday, which is spearheaded by the Department of National Defense. The ceremony was held in partnership with DOLE at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

Brion's formal takeover was scheduled last Monday.

The oath taking of the new Development Bank of the Philippines chairperson, former Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas, was also held during the same event.

According to DOLE, the oath taking was historic because it was the first time that an official who rose from the ranks of the Labor Department has been appointed as the top banker of the Philippines' foremost development bank.

Brion also rose from the ranks, primarily at DOLE where he earlier assumed the post of the Undersecretary for Labor Relations in 2001. He was appointed to the Department of Foreign Affairs as Undersecretary in 2002. Before his new appointment, Brion was an associate justice at the Court of Appeals.

### LABOR FRONT

## A finding of violation

By **FERDIE P. DE LA TORRE**  
REPORTER

**Q: What will happen if the Labor director, upon inspection for compliance monitoring or investigation of a complaint, finds a violation of labor laws?**

**A:** If the Labor director finds a violation of any provision of the Nonresident Workers Act, the Minimum Wage and Hour Act, Labor's rules and regulations, a breach of any provision of any document filed to employ a nonresident worker, or housing conditions of the alien worker, he or she shall within 30 days issue a warning, notice of violation, and determination of no violation.

\*\*\*

**Q: What will the Labor director do when the responsible party does not comply with his or her warning?**

**A:** The issuance of a warning gives the responsible party time to correct the violation or breach. According to the Alien Labor Rules And Regulations, if the responsible party does not comply or correct the problem within 10 days, the Labor director shall immediately issue a notice of violation and conduct a hearing.

Upon the Labor director's issuance of a notice of violation, the caption of the case will be amended to reflect the Labor director as the complainant in the case. In any hearing or other proceeding subsequent to the issuance of the notice of violation, the Labor's legal counsel will represent the Division of Labor and the director.

\*\*\*

**Q: What will happen to the complaint if the Labor director finds no violation?**

**A:** If no violation is found, the Labor director will issue a determination of no violation in which he or she shall state the basis of the complaint and the reasons why the investigation resulted in a finding that the respondent could not be found to have committed any labor law violations.

The director will also advise the parties of available procedures to petition for a hearing on the matter in the Labor's Administrative Hearing Office.

Submit questions on labor issues to *Saipan Tribune* via e-mail at [editor@saipantribune.com](mailto:editor@saipantribune.com), or by calling 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747 and leaving a message at Ext. 133 or 135. You may also submit questions in person by writing it down and dropping it off at the *Saipan Tribune's* office on the second floor of the CIC Centre on Beach Road, Garapan.

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# 'Nicole' takes witness stand in rape trial

By **TERESA CEROJANO**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)**—A Filipino woman identified the U.S. Marine who allegedly raped her as she tearfully testified Thursday during an emotional 6-week-old trial.

Before the 22-year-old could provide details of the sexual encounter, she broke down, prompting the judge to adjourn until Friday.

The woman, identified in court by the pseudonym "Nicole," alleged she was attacked in a van Nov. 1 by Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith as Lance Cpl. Keith Silkwood, Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier cheered him on.

The Marines have refused to answer the rape charges, punishable by up to 40 years in prison, prompting the judge to enter an innocent plea for them. Defense lawyers insist Smith had consensual sex with the woman.

The woman said she managed her family's canteen in the military's Southern Command, where she met U.S. soldiers in the country for counterterrorism training in southern Zamboanga city.

She told the court she was already intoxicated while dancing at a bar at the Subic Bay freeport, a former U.S. naval base, when Smith grabbed her by the wrist to dance.

Scared because she didn't know who Smith was, she turned to a U.S. Navy man, a family friend from Zamboanga, who said it was OK to dance

with the Marine while telling Smith, "Just take care of her."

She continued to drink and then testified that she was forced out of the bar.

"The next thing I remember, someone was lying on top of me," she said. "Someone was kissing me. ... It was Smith." She began crying, prompting the judge to adjourn the hearing.

Outside the court, some 60 women protested, using sticks to beat posters of the four defendants stamped with "Jail the yankees."

During the fast-track proceedings to beat a one-year deadline for the case, several witnesses have testified the woman was seen carried out of a bar on Smith's back into a van. Other witnesses said they later saw the Marines take the half-naked woman out of the van and leave her on a sidewalk.

Dr. Rolando Ortiz II of the James Gordon Memorial Hospital in Olongapo city, west of Manila, earlier testified that the accuser suffered bruises on her arms, legs and genital area that were consistent with a sexual assault.

Carpentier, who together with the other Marines has been confined to the U.S. Embassy in Manila, told a Philippine TV station in a rare interview that "Nicole" was being manipulated to accuse the servicemen.

"She's a victim but not a victim of us, she's a victim of some of the people surrounding her," he told GMA television, without elaborating.

"We're human. We're not, you know, the monsters that



**A group of alleged Filipino "comfort women" or Japanese sex slaves during World War II display pictures of the four US Marines accused of raping a Filipino woman during a rally Thursday, July 6, 2006 in Manila's financial district of Makati.**

we're made out to be," he said.

The embassy, which has custody of the men under a treaty with the Philippine government, hasn't released their ages or hometowns. Under the treaty, the proceedings must conclude in one year.

The case sparked anti-

American protests in the former U.S. colony and is seen as a black mark on exercises credited with helping weaken al-Qaida-linked militants in the country's restive south.

The men were part of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Okinawa, Japan.

## Ex-beauty queen sues Erap for fraud

By **TERESA CEROJANO**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)**—A former beauty queen filed a complaint Thursday against ousted Philippine President Joseph Estrada and seven other people for allegedly defrauding her of her mother's property on a false promise that she would be given a beer dealership.

Joelle Marie Pelaez, a 29-year-old American citizen of Filipino descent who was second runner-up for the 1999 Miss Philippines title, filed the complaint at the Makati

city prosecutor's office against Estrada and top executives of Philippine food and beer giant San Miguel Corp. and United Coconut Planters Bank.

Pelaez wrote that shortly after meeting Estrada at a party in 1998, he tried to woo her with expensive gifts, including a check for 2 million pesos (US\$37,734 million; €31,446) that she used to buy a BMW car, a gold Rolex watch and trips to Hong Kong and the resort island of Boracay.

She said Ramon Ang, then president of San Miguel Corp., told her in 2000 that Estrada

had instructed him to give her a dealership for San Miguel beer.

She was told to go to the bank, where UCPB officials arranged a 5-million-peso (US\$94,000; €78,000) loan that she used to develop a warehouse and buy a truck and other equipment.

Pelaez said Ang later told her that she was supposed provide collateral for the beer bottles, so she handed over to San Miguel titles to two condominium units owned by her mother worth a total of 20 million pesos (US\$377,358; €314,465).

She said that after she started avoiding Estrada, the deal never

materialized and the bank took possession of her mother's properties.

Estrada, in a radio interview Wednesday, denied knowledge of the transactions—or that he wooed Pelaez and gave her expensive gifts.

His spokesman, Didagen Dilangalen, said Thursday that Estrada plans to file a complaint for libel and malicious prosecution against Pelaez. He said she was being used by Estrada's political foes to attack the detained former leader as his 5-year-old trial for plunder appears to be winding down.

## RP to get 26 US helicopters

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)**—The Philippine military will soon obtain 26 Vietnam War-era U.S. helicopters as it attempts to wipe out a long-running communist insurgency, an air force spokesman said Thursday.

At least six of the UH-1H helicopters, popularly known as Hueys, will arrive this month, said air force Maj. Augusto dela Pena. The other 20 will arrive by the end of the year.

"Definitely this is going to be a big boost in our intensified campaign against the New People's Army," he said, referring to the communist rebels. The military will utilize the helicopters as attack and transport aircraft.

Six Hueys have been refurbished at the expense of the Philippine government, and the 20 others were donated by the U.S. under an Excess Defense Articles program promised by President George W. Bush during President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's visit to Washington in 2003, dela Pena said.

Arroyo last month ordered an intensified campaign to finish off the 37-year-old communist insurgency, backing it with the release of 1 billion pesos (US\$19 million; €15 million) to buy more attack helicopters and other military equipment.

The Philippine air force currently has 45 operational Hueys used extensively as helicopter gunships, for transporting troops and field supplies, for medical evacuations, and disaster relief operations.

The rebels broke off Norwegian-brokered peace talks two years ago to protest the government's refusal to lobby for their removal from U.S. and European terrorism lists.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye has dismissed recent rebel calls to resume the talks, saying they must first agree to a cease-fire. The guerrillas have refused to sign a truce before a political settlement is reached.

## Batanes on alert as Ewiniar heads for Japan

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)**—A cluster of islands in the far north of the Philippines raised a weather alert early Friday as Typhoon Ewiniar, packing winds of up to 165 kilometers per hour (100 miles per hour), moved toward Okinawa, Japan, forecasters said.

The typhoon, with gusts of up to 230 kph (140 mph), was located about 550 kilometers (340 miles) northeast of Basco, Batanes, where authorities warned residents to expect rains with moderate to sometimes strong winds that could produce flying debris, life-threatening flash floods and mudslides.

The core of the storm was expected to pass west of Okinawa, Japan, on Saturday evening, before making landfall over South Korea as a weakened category 1 typhoon on Monday morning, forecasters said.

## Absentee voting registration a disappointment for Comelec

By **JEROME ANING**  
INQUIRER

The Commission on Elections yesterday expressed disappointment over the ongoing registration for overseas absentee voters -- with only about 76,000 registered, short of the agency's one million target before the Aug. 31 deadline.

Commissioner Florentino Tuason Jr. said 70 percent of the new voters were departing overseas Filipino workers

who registered in booths at the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

While the two booths generate 400 to 500 registrants every day, the situation is different in the Philippine embassies, consulates and overseas labor offices.

"Unfortunately, the turnout of registrants abroad is a bit slow because of certain factors," Tuason, head of the Comelec Committee on Overseas Absentee Voting, told reporters.

Chief among these, he said, is the distance in Europe and Africa, where applicants have to travel to another country that has a Philippine embassy or consulate to register.

Tuason also said resident immigrants and those with double citizenships, especially those in the United States, were also hesitant to register because of the requirement that they have to sign an affidavit that they would return to the Philippines within two years.

The attitude and perception of Filipinos residing and working abroad were also hampering the registration efforts, according to Tuason.

"There has been greater interest for the OAV in many Filipino communities but in others, there is apathy and uncertainty," he said.

Tuason and other Comelec officials have toured or will be touring Filipino communities abroad to help boost interest for the OAV.



# PINOYSTYLE

## A very triumphant Ellen Marfil, a very private Keanu Reeves

By RUBEN V. NEPALES  
INQUIRER

LOS ANGELES—"Pambayad ng utang!"

That's what "Mga Pusang Gala" ("Stray Cats") director-producer Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil said when asked over dinner last Wednesday how she will spend the \$10,000 prize she got for winning the Dockers First Feature Award at the recent San Francisco International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender film festival.

Ellen, a UP alumna and erstwhile Philippine Educational Theater Association actress, almost missed accepting her trophy during the awards night. She was planning to leave San Francisco for nearby Oakland after her official stay as a film fest guest ended, when the festival's executive director asked her to stay for the Closing Night party. That was a good omen for the filmmaker behind "Mga Pusang Gala," which stars Ricky Davao, Irma Adlawan, Reggie Curly, Lauren Novelo and Alchris Galura.

### Small world

We raised glasses of red wine and toasted Ellen twice—for her triumph in the San Francisco film fest, which was celebrating its 30th anniversary (hence the name of this year's event, Frameline30); and for signing up that day in LA with Ariztical Entertainment for the film's international release.

We also cheered how small our world really is. Ellen's brother, JR Ongkeko, is married to Chit Bauzon Ongkeko, niece of my elementary school teacher in Calasiao, Pangasinan. And now, Mara Ongkeko, Ellen's niece and JR and Chit's daughter, is the high school classmate of our youngest daughter, Ella.

Since Lino Brocka's nephew, Q. Allan Brocka, won the same award two years ago, Ellen and I couldn't help but reminisce about Lino. We learned that Ellen had a small role in Lino's Peta staging of "Larawan," which we had watched. As a filmmaker, Lino was fast but passionate, according to Ellen, who worked behind the scenes for the late great director.

### Very Pinoy

As a person, the late great Filipino filmmaker was "malambing," said Ellen. To this day, she is grateful that Lino wrote a letter of recommendation that made it possible for her to get a scholarship in video production in France.

By coincidence, Ellen and Lino were on the same flight to Paris when she left Manila for the two-month course. Upon landing in France, Ellen teased Lino about why he had a larger suitcase despite the fact that he was going to be in the French capital for only five days. According to Ellen, Lino revealed that he had packed lots of adobo in his luggage so he won't miss Pinoy food.

Ellen narrated that one of the San Francisco jurors jokingly told her that with the \$10,000 she won, she could make more queer films. She might direct a horror movie next although she has four other movie projects in the slate.

If Ellen was "bibang-biba" and in a celebratory mood, Keanu Reeves was a different story. Read on.

### Still-shy Keanu

In our interview with Keanu Reeves last year for "Constantine," the one lingering image that stayed in our mind to this day was that of the actor seeming to press, with his bare arms, imaginary creases on the tablecloth as he answered journalists' questions. The man appeared shy, uncomfortable with media scrutiny despite many years in the industry, and very private.

Cut to the present—a press con for his two new movies, "The Lake House" and "A Scanner Darkly." Keanu is still just as shy, awkward in the interview format and fiercely protective of his privacy. Of course we like our interview subjects to be loquacious and quotable but we don't expect all actors to be glib and gushing with sound bites. In this regard, we respect and have come to expect Keanu for what he is—a man of few words.

He didn't hesitate to say, "It's none of your business; that's personal," in response to a colleague's persistent line of questioning.

In "The Lake House," a remake of a Korean

movie, "Il Mare," Keanu and his "Speed" co-star Sandra Bullock are reunited as two lovers who discover that they're actually living two years apart. They must try to solve the mystery to save their extraordinary romance.

### Live to animation

Keanu's other new movie, "A Scanner Darkly," is interesting because it was shot as a live action and then transformed into an animated film using a technology known as "interpolated rotoscoping." Set in the future, Keanu plays an undercover cop whose assignment to spy on his friends launches him on a paranoid journey into the absurd.

Also populating the dark work of "Scanner" are Robert Downey Jr., Winona Ryder and Woody Harrelson.

The two movies are as different as night and day. Keanu, dressed in his favorite getup of black tee, jacket and pants, spelled it out: "'The Lake House' is a love story. 'A Scanner Darkly' is a comedy and a tragedy. I don't think of these works as being science fiction or fantastical. I think they're very human stories."

Asked if he sees a parallel in the story of "Scanner" and what's going on in the US, where the government has admitted that it is spying on "suspicious" phone conversations, he replied, "I don't think it's just the United States. I would say all cities around the world have to come up against this technology about surveillance. I think about how it's used and abused. The thing that seems to be happening is that there's just no redress. No one's watching the keeper of the information and protesting about the loss of personal rights. The powers of the entities that control information seem to be increasing while the individual's

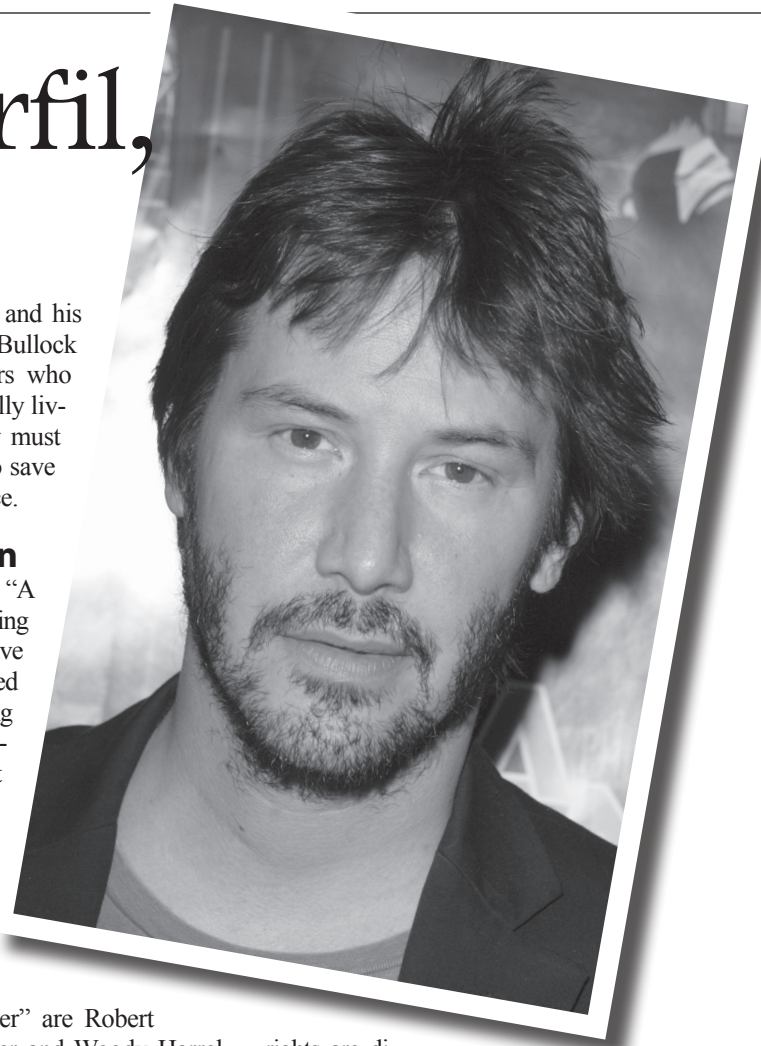
rights are diminishing."

### In touch with Sandra

Of Sandra, he revealed this much: "Sandra and I have kept in touch over the years. We've had some dinners. She's written me some letters when I was in Australia working on a film."

An avid reader, Keanu was more forthright with his current reading fare. "I just finished Timothy Leary's biography, which was really good because it covers the period from the '50s to the '90s," he said. "It was interesting to have that kind of cultural view of America, what happened through the years of counter culture. I am starting to read another Graham Greene novel. I've also been reading [F. Scott] Fitzgerald."

When a reporter asked when was he settling down, since he was now in his 40s (he turns 42 in September), Keanu responded with, "Who knows? No comment." But then he added, "I'd like to [settle



## Would Tirso and Mia do it again?

By MARINEL CRUZ  
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

"Shall We Dance" Season 2 grand champs Tirso Cruz III and Sexbomb Mia Pangyarihan would think twice before joining another dance contest.

After all, they said, what they did for the finals night on June 25 was no mean feat. They had to compete with "more experienced" dancers like Mystica and partner Miguel dela Serna, Joshua Zamora and Janeth Somosot, Desiree del Valle and Dennis Sy.

Tirso and Mia were also scrutinized by three judges—Audie Gemora, Regine Tolentino and Edna Ledesma.

And despite their hectic individual schedules, they had to rehearse five dance numbers with a maximum of 12 hours practice time.

According to associate producer Nelson Alindogan, each team was instructed to dance the pasadoble, jive, rumba and cha-cha, and was told to pick a dance of their choice.

Viewers rewarded Tirso and Mia's hard work with an overwhelming text vote—the "sole basis" of the decision, according to Alindogan. "The judges

[simply] gave comments to help the viewers along."

### Did you expect to win?

**Tirso:** Of course I wanted to win. Actually, all groups deserve to be champions. I didn't expect to win the Texter's Choice award, though, so I'd like to thank our friends and fans. This is not a one-man effort. Anna Palma, our dance instructor, joined our team in the third week of the monthly finals. She proved to be very helpful.

**Mia:** Honestly, I thought we'd lose. I kept thinking, "We don't stand a chance here."

### How many hours did you set aside for practice?

**T:** We were given only a total of 12 hours to rehearse for the five numbers. It was up to us, how to divide them. The problem was, it was impossible for us to fix a practice schedule. We rehearsed in dance studios owned by Regine (Tolentino), Geline (Eugenio), or the Club 88 on Samat Street in Mandaluyong City where professional dancers practiced. Sometimes, we rehearsed at the Sexbomb studio.

### What were your biggest hurdles?

**T:** Rehearsal time was our biggest problem. Anna wasn't always around. Mia and I had to turn down several job offers. I'm not a dancer... I needed time to learn my steps.

**M:** Kuya Pip (Tirso's nickname) is the oldest male among the competitors, [so] there were moves he couldn't execute. He couldn't do lifts, or really fast steps. I had a hard time, too. The moves of real ballroom dancers are different. I kept thinking, "Sayang naman ang effort ni Kuya Pip, hindi naman kami mananalò."

### Would you join another dance contest?

**T:** When this came about, I didn't look at it as a competition. But after the first week, I realized that if I didn't give this my all I would embarrass myself and my partner. I couldn't take it lightly and shortchange the viewers.

I'm not sure I'd do it again [but] I'd like to continue dancing with Anna or Edna (contest judge and last year's Blackpool Dance Festival grand champ).

**M:** Sure, but not a competition against dance instructors. Hindi ko kaya talaga.

## 'Amazing Race: Asia' is on

**KUALA LUMPUR**—The Asian version of the Emmy-winning reality show "The Amazing Race" was launched here on Tuesday by AXN, an international action and adventure cable channel from Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE).

From all indications, AXN pulled out all the stops for this franchise. Ricky Ow, general manager of SPE Networks Asia told Inquirer Entertainment: "It's a multi-million dollar, mega-sized production. At first, we thought it was a mission impossible—logistically, it was a nightmare. We had to move 60 to 80 production people and tons of equipment in a matter of days across different territories."

Apart from the traveling crew, the production employed another 60 to 80 locals in each destination.

Ow volunteered that a month and a half was spent on principal photography. "We are now in post-production; we start promoting the show in six Asian countries on July 8."

First stop is Seoul, Korea. Manila is the penultimate stop in September. Delhi, India, is the last stop in October. No definite premiere date has been set.

Just like in the US program, which won three Emmy Awards, the Asian edition will pit 10 to 12 pairs in a grueling race in which they have to guess their next destination and outwit each other by coming up with the quickest possible route.

Ow said that over 1,000 aspirants from the Philippines to Nepal sent video auditions, some "professionally done and polished." The big winners will have US\$100,000 between them. (The prize in the US version is \$1 million.)

"It seems the contestants joined not for the money, but for the bragging rights. It's their passion," Ow said quite seriously.

Acquiring the franchise, he noted, was a wise business decision. "Its first season was watched by 25 million viewers." (*Inquirer*)



## OUT OF THE CLOSET

# Caps, shoes jerseys

By **MARINEL CRUZ**  
INQUIRER

Of all his accomplishments since he joined show biz three years ago, actor Mark Herras is proudest of having built a home for his family.

The actor moved into the two-story, five-bedroom house in an exclusive village in Quezon City in November.

"I built this on my own," he told Inquirer Entertainment during our visit. "My parents became victims of a scam last year. They lost a lot of money. I'm working hard so I can help improve our life."

The first male winner of GMA 7's talent search program "Starstruck," Mark stars with ex-girlfriend Jennylyn Mercado in the network's comedy series, "I Luv NY," directed by Louie Ignacio.

Mark said he was happy about how "cool" his bedroom turned out. "Everything inside this room is my idea. I told my dad I wanted a glass door that led to a terrace. I also suggested that the blinds be in black. There are only two colors here—red and black."

Too bad his bedroom closet cannot store all of Mark's stuff. This is why he is now using the extra room for his jackets, suits and, of course, his shoes.

"I collect rubber shoes," Mark said. "I keep track of how many models of Adidas and Nike rubber shoes I have by photographing them and storing the

pictures in my laptop."

## SHOES

This pair of sneakers from Adidas is very unique. It's called Adicolor. The trademark black Adidas stripes can be changed to white, pink, etc.

I still have the Nike Air Force One I wore on the cover of my "Dance Hits" album. My newest is Nike Shox Vince Carter 4. I also have Kobe Bryant Uptempo. From Adidas, I have this Kevin Garnett pair.

I collect Jordan rubber shoes, too. I have Air Jordan XXI with replaceable airsoles, Air Jordan Carmelo and Air Jordan IV Retro, my newest Jordan.

The guys at Nike Park in Gateway Mall have asked for my number and promised to text me when new items arrive.

I don't get to wear all of these rubber shoes. When I go out, I'd rather wear sneakers or my Timberland leathers. As a collector, I feel good just knowing I have them in my closet.

## TOYS

I started collecting toys when I won "Starstruck." The first one I bought was a collector's edition of Spider Man and the whole Justice League. My most recent purchase is a Juggernaut action figure.

I'm not the kind who spends all his earnings in toys, although I hang out with friends like that. Some of these

toys are their gifts to me.

## PANTS

I like wearing jogging pants, especially for rehearsals. I like those that are lightweight and water repellant.

This pair of denim jeans is from a friend who just came from China. I've not worn it yet—it's several pieces of denim cloth sewn together, and really, really heavy.

I used to wear nothing but baggy jeans. Now I try to wear straight cuts, like this one (shows a very faded, soft-fabric Abercrombie). Direk Louie has a pair exactly like this.

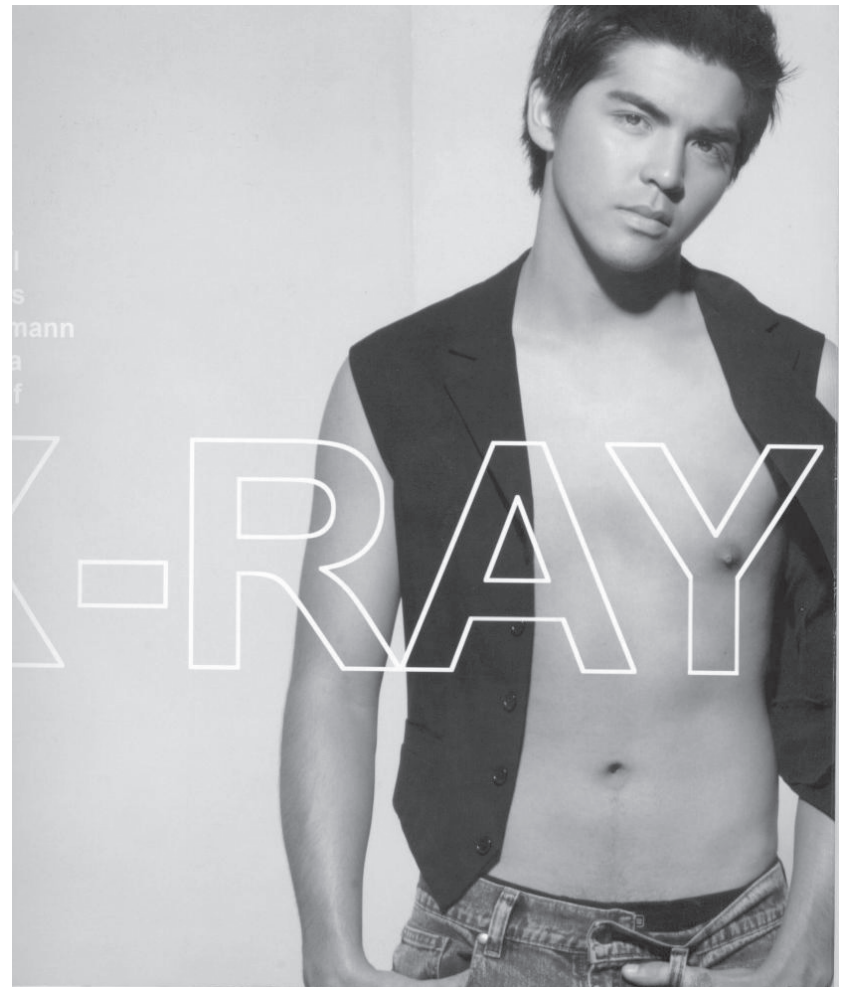
## HATS

I love hats and caps. I bought a lot during our trip to San Francisco to launch GMA 7 Pinoy TV and when we made "I Luv NY" in New York.

Hats and caps sort of describe the people who wear them. Truckers' hats are worn by what we call "punks" or "trashers." Caps with embroidered baseball and basketball logos are worn by hip-hopers.

I buy all kinds. Hindi ako namimili. I also have beanies, bonnets and cowboy hats.

The red baseball cap I wore on the cover of my first album is the most memorable. I don't have it with me anymore. Anton dela Paz wanted it so I gave it to him. I had no idea at the time that the album would go platinum.



## TOPS

I like jerseys. I've been wearing them even before I joined "Starstruck." I like hip-hop fashion.

I always wear a shirt under my jersey. Payatot kasi (laughs). I bought two or three pieces in the States. The rest are from local shops, mostly American Boulevard.

The tops I consider special are those I bought in G-Unit stores in the US. G-Unit is a rap group led by 50 Cent.

I will never get rid of this button-down shirt, which I bought in high school. I haven't worn it yet. It's still too big for me after all these years.

## JACKETS

Rainier (Castillo, Mark's "Starstruck"

batch mate) likes wearing jackets more than I do. He actually wants to have this green cotton jacket. I told him it's too big for him.

The really thick black jacket from Tribal Gear is what I wear when I travel abroad. I can wear it with just about anything.

## FORMAL WEAR

Too bad I can't find my white suit. I wore it when I hosted a Guillermo Mendoza Memorial Awards program. That was the first time I wore an all-white outfit. I normally wear black suits.

But I still have the blue suit I wore on "Starstruck Finals" night three years ago. Obviously, I didn't choose the color; the production people did.

# A 'kakanin' called 'binagol'

By **MICKY FENIX**  
INQUIRER

Kakanin is the subject matter of this year's The Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Award. It's the general name for native cakes and its root word is kanin or cooked rice.

But native cakes can also be made from fruit (saba banana), root crops or other grains like corn and millet.

The award committee hopes that with so many kinds of kakanin throughout the country, there will be varied entries about the many kinds of puto, bibingka, suman, sapin-sapin, etc.\*

On a recent trip to Leyte, I had the chance to know more about one kind of kakanin we love to eat and which is a welcome pasalubong, awaited by friends and family.

My agenda for my first day in Leyte was a trip to the town of Dagami. It's the place known for binagol, a specialty made from a kind of root crop, with a sweetened center mixed in with some peanuts, and placed in half a coconut shell, then wrapped in banana leaves and secured with a string tied in a radial pattern. It's a t

It's a treat awaited by many people who have tasted it, who find the very sweet center tempered

by the comparatively bland surrounding mixture.

Its taste and what it looked like were all I knew of binagol and so I welcomed the opportunity to find out exactly how it was done.

From Tacloban, past Tanauan, we got to Dagami where some houses sold piles of binagol at their makeshift selling area. Because we wanted



to know the process, we were disappointed that most of the houses that made the specialty finished cooking the night before.

It seemed the Tacloban fiesta had something to do with that. They knew there would be so many orders for feasts and for balikbayans, all anxious to taste binagol once again.

We were pointed in the direction of one house

where it was possible there was still some cooking going on. Same story. The cooking was almost done and the last batch was going through the final phase of boiling. Pieces from an earlier batch were drying on the table.

## Basics of 'binagol'-making

The proprietors, Berting and Letty Pasagui, were willing to let their cooks tell us about the process. But they also said even if we were there at the start of the preparation and on to the cooking, the whole thing took about 10 hours to do. So, unless we were willing to wait for the next cooking, we would have to make do with the narrative.

Outside the house, stalks of talyan, the main ingredient, leaned on the walls. Talyan is a root crop that looks like a giant gabi (taro) plant. The couple's supply comes from Calbiga in Samar and costs P100 per piece.

According to the cooks, the talyan has to grow on a sloped area so the water does not remain in the soil and cause the root crop to rot. They also said harvesters could tell which talyan wasn't fit for cooking by partially cutting the stem and putting some of the sap to the arm. If the arm itched, they would bypass that plant.

The talyan is stripped first of its outer covering to reveal the pure white interior. This is pared until the surface looks the way it's supposed to, pristine white and smooth.

Next step is to run the talyan through a grating machine. The grated root crop is mixed with the rest of the ingredients (coconut milk, sugar).

For the sweetened part, gabi, sugar and the latik (coconut milk with sugar), plus some peanuts, are cooked together for an hour.

The assembly starts by lining a half coconut shell (bagol) with a cut banana leaf. Another town supplies the shell—halved, cleaned, smoothened.

The sweetened part is placed next then the talyan mixture, filling up all the spaces, with the top shaped into a small mound. A cut banana leaf covers the whole thing and everything is held together with a string.

Packed binagol are then placed in a deep pot filled with water then boiled. After the final cooking, the pieces are retrieved from the pot and brought out to dry.

The Pasaguis make 40 dozens every day but, when there is a fiesta somewhere, the number goes up to 100 dozens. A dozen costs P200. When we bought two dozens, Bert Pasagui jokingly said he expected me to buy more considering I was working for a newspaper. Local humor makes my work a lot more interesting.

Binagol is too rich for me and I can't finish one piece by myself. It's even richer when eaten just after it was cooked, as we did when our purchase was brought back to Tacloban. All the Warays at the table kept saying how different and how good just-cooked binagol was.

## Shell-less version

There is a version of binagol that is not packed in a coconut shell. Hence, it doesn't deserve the name and so is known as sagmani. Another difference is that the sweetened part is distributed evenly throughout the entire sagmani, making it a more democratic kakanin.



## OPINYON

## A sinister plan to butcher civilians

No sooner had the ink dried on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of "all-out war" to crush the 37-year-old communist insurgency in two years than the Armed Forces jumped into the fray with a lust for blood and battle not seen since the height of the military campaign against the Huk-balahap rebellion in 1949-1952. At the time, the young post-war republic faced the grave threat of being overrun by the communist revolution with the Huks, already then with an armed strength of no fewer than 10,000 men, knocking at the outer perimeter of Manila which was surrounded by sandbags and checkpoints at its approaches.

Days after the President's declaration, the Armed Forces reinforced the troops deployed in the military drive in Central, Northern and Southern Luzon with troops withdrawn from Mindanao. The redeployment unveiled the mailed fist of the campaign.

At no time since 1950 has the life of the republic and Philippine democracy been seriously threatened by the Marxist revolution -- until the Arroyo administration reinvented a life-and-death scenario for the republic by resurrecting the Red nightmare of the 1940s, half a century later and 17 years after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain.

The administration is now telling the Filipino people that they are facing the gravest threat to the survival of democracy from the continuing and exaggerated communist insurgency. The government has identified the "leftists" as the foremost "enemies of the state," in an attempt to rally public opinion behind this spurious anti-communist campaign.

In this new campaign, the administration is constructing the specter of communist takeover

on little more than an imagined threat that has no basis in fact, evidence or historical reality. The exaggeration of the threat undermines the credibility of the scare campaign, and dooms it to failure in galvanizing popular support.

The public perception of this spurious threat is that it is not the republic that faces overthrow from the overblown insurgency, but rather it is the regime's life that is threatened -- but not by

**'...the administration is constructing the specter of communist takeover on little more than an imagined threat that has no basis in fact, evidence or historical reality. The exaggeration of the threat undermines the credibility of the scare campaign, and dooms it to failure in galvanizing popular support.'**

the leftists but by the resurgent reactionary Right in the Armed Forces, which the President has now deployed as the spearhead of her campaign. The regime and its military allies are deluding themselves if they believe that their perception of the communist threat is shared by the rest of the population. The civil sector has gotten used over decades with being intimidated by the communist scare to know that the security of the state is not

identical with the security of the regime. And this explains why the campaign has no resonance with the broad sector of public opinion.

The Arroyo campaign has a heavy military accent and is short on the civic action component (that is, "winning the hearts and mind" of the people) that made President Ramon Magsaysay's insurgency campaign of the 1950s moderately successful. President Arroyo's campaign is driven by the strategy of instilling fear of punitive and repressive police action. By contrast, the military side of the Magsaysay campaign was built mainly on the combat efficiency of Philippine Constabulary battalion combat teams, exemplified by Col. Napoleon Valeriano's elite Nenita Unit (the Skull and Bones strike force), the nemesis of the Huk guerrillas.

Today, Ms Arroyo's anti-communist strike forces are led by officers who lack the military brilliance of Valeriano but with reputations and records of atrocities against civilians and non-combatants exceeding the worst atrocities perpetrated by the Nenita Unit.

The blueprint of war outlined in the "orders of battle" of Oplan Bantay Laya envisages decimation of the non-military segments of the communist movement. It is not designed to engage the New People's Army in armed conflict in field warfare. It is designed to butcher and massacre defenseless non-combatants. It is therefore a sinister plan for civilian butchery, a strategy which exposes the military and police to fewer risks and casualties than they would face in armed fighting with the communist guerrillas.



## Analysis

By **AMANDO DORONILA**  
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

This strategy is different from the Magsaysay campaign spearheaded by the Nenita Unit, which engaged the Huks in firefights more than it cracked down on the urban cadres of the Communist Party in the trade unions.

One document made available to the Inquirer on Oplan Bantay Laya lists targeted sectoral front groups "advancing the revolutionary struggle of the Left."

The disclosure followed the upsurge of killings of Left-wing militants since 2001, totaling more than 200 members of the legal Bayan Muna party-list organization. The principal suspects behind these killings are paramilitary death squads. According to an Inquirer source, documents "don't say that members of sectoral groups are to be killed but they do use the term neutralize -- a term implicitly understood by the underworld of Philippine politics as a go-ahead for death squad assassinations."

The emphasis of this strategy on "neutralizing" sectoral/front/legal organizations helps explain why most of the victims of the past five years have been non-combatants and defenseless members of the Left. During that period, the number of murdered aboveground members of the Left has far exceeded fatalities of the New People's Army in armed encounters with security forces.

This strategy is blamed for the systematic massacre of non-combatants. It offers a huge potential for human rights abuses and atrocities. It makes the regime look more cold-blooded in its methods in trying to crush the insurgency than its predecessors, not excluding the Marcos dictatorship. It opens the path to the slaughter of the defenseless.

## PINOY KASI

## 'Bastos'

By **MICHAEL TAN**  
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Several years ago while conducting research on young adult Filipinos' sexuality, I realized how important the word "*bastos*" was to young people.

When applied to sexual matters, "*bastos*" meant "lewd" and "obscene." Quite often, the word would be used as a kind of blanket censorship that reinforced the culture of silence we have about sexuality. Sex in general was seen as *bastos* and therefore not suitable for conversations, at least not between elders and the young.

At another level, however, the term made sexual matters more alluring. Anyone knowledgeable about sex—in theory or in practice—would be called *bastos* in a tone that mixed a bit of mock contempt with grudging admiration.

The concept of *bastos* as lewdness tends to sidetrack a more important core meaning of the word, which is disrespect. "*Binastos ako*" means that someone has been disrespectful to us, and this can mean both sexual and non-sexual matters, and could be through words, deeds, or even a whole demeanor, as when a child gives that "*dedma*" [expressionless] posture in response to a parent's sermon.

I think we need to move *bastos* away from a proscriptive, admonishing term toward one that emphasizes ethics, particularly respect for others. Let me cite two examples, from cur-

rent events, to explain my point.

## Bikini

Last Wednesday, July 5, was the 60th anniversary of the bikini. I always thought the name had something to do with its being a two-piece outfit (thus, "bi") but it turns out its innovator, the French designer Louis Reard, had gotten the name from Bikini Atoll out in the South Pacific, where the United States had conducted its first nuclear tests in June 1946.

Reard's bikini, made of three triangular patches of cloth held together with ties, was as earthshaking as the nuclear tests. Moralists and prudes quickly reacted. The bikini was banned in several countries and even by some French town mayors. Acceptance came slowly. A song made waves in 1960 with the title *Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini* and helped to boost sales. In 1962, Ursula Andress wore a bikini in the James Bond thriller *Dr. No*. And in 1964, the American magazine *Sports Illustrated* first used a bikini-clad model on its front cover.

Over time, the bikini has been analyzed and re-analyzed by social scientists for its social meanings. For some of the more feminist-oriented, the bikini represents the commodification of the female body, exposing as much skin as possible for male gratification. Paradoxically, the bikini can also be seen as an icon of sexual liberation, of women being able to expose themselves without fear of ostracism. There can be mixed feelings

about this exposure, even from among women. Some see the bikini as having reinforced the premium on slimness; others (and I can testify to seeing this in Brazil) wouldn't care less what their body shape is—Coca-Cola-, apple- or pear-shaped—using the bikini as a statement: "I'm proud of what my body is, even if it doesn't conform to your standards."

In the Philippines, the bikini hasn't quite gained acceptance yet. Visit beaches used by the masses and you'll find people not even using a one-piece suit; instead, they bathe in a blouse and short pants, apparently oblivious to the way a wet blouse may be even more provoking than a bikini.

The reluctance to use a bikini speaks not only of modesty but of body image, a fear that one might draw criticism for daring to use a bikini without the "k", the "correct" proportions. I am told that the main buyers of magazines like FHM are women, curious to check, from the models in bikini, what men are looking for.

So, is the bikini *bastos*? Let's save the possible answers for the end.

## I-Witness

The other case study I wanted to use was the recent two-week suspension by the Movie and Television Regulatory and Classification Board of GMA Network's "I-Witness" television program for featuring a documentary "*Hindi Ito Bastos*: Lolas with Phalluses." The documentary featured Kalayaan town in the province of Que-

zon, where grandmothers dance with wooden penises to greet newlyweds. The MTRCB reprimanded "I-Witness" for featuring "frontal nudity" and "masturbation." If they had been asked to render their opinion, and decision in Filipino, I think they would have claimed that "*Hindi Ito Bastos*" was *bastos*.

The MTRCB's decision reflects a cruder definition of the word, a censorial term that sees anything sexual, including nudity, as lewd and obscene. The decision lacks a contextual understanding of how the dancing is so much part of local culture, one which has been done for many years, out in the streets. Howie Severino, the "I-Witness" host, asked some Kalayaan residents if they thought the dances were *bastos* or not, and opinions were split, but even those who said they were *bastos* said it lightly, with ill-disguised glee.

The dancing lolas remind us that popular Filipino culture is actually less conservative than we think. Kalayaan isn't the only town that's so comfortable with public displays of sexuality. One of my students many years ago compiled "green" *loahan* from another town in Quezon, songs about sexual anatomy and sexual acts that were sung, again by grandmothers and grandfathers, at wedding receptions. The list could go on and on, from the man in the barrel souvenirs of Baguio City to double-meaning pop songs.

It's hard to trace the origins of practices like those of the dancing "lolas" [grandmothers]. There may be a pre-

colonial fertility ritual aspect to all this. But I'm more inclined to see these as community "desensitization" exercises that help young people, especially newlyweds, to be more comfortable with sexual matters.

## Questioning 'bastos'

So, is the bikini *bastos*? If skin exposure is the criterion, then yes it is, but if it's a matter of respect and disrespect, the answer becomes harder to come by. I would think it is *bastos*—meaning disrespectful—to deprive women of their autonomy, their right to choose what they want to wear to the beach. Are they *bastos* to people who may find the bikini too revealing? No, because people too have a choice not to look, and if they dare look and find the women stimulating, it's their problem.

And the dancing lolas with phalluses, are they *bastos*? Taken in the context of community and of culture, I think not. In fact, what would be *bastos* is to go against the cultural norms of helping people to feel comfortable with sex. I'd go a step further and propose censorship itself is disrespectful, *bastos*, when it reads malice into a perfectly innocent aspect of culture. Censorship, too, is *bastos* when it deprives people of an understanding of their own culture.

I respect the prudes' right to deny reality, to create their own fantasy sexless world, but I do resent it when they violate our right to view an aspect of our culture, to laugh and to marvel, and to come away understanding ourselves better.



# SAMU'T SARI



## MICRO GAMES VOLUNTEERS

MDX Amateur Radio Club volunteers repaint the parking lot of the Ada Gym in preparation for the 6th Micronesian Games. The radio club, together with other Filipino organizations, took on several voluntary jobs to ensure the success of the holding of the Games last June 23-July2, 2006.



## PHILIPPINE-CNMI FRIENDSHIP WEEK

Officers from the Philippine Consulate General and different Filipino organizations in the CNMI pose for a souvenir photo with Lt. Gov. Tim Villagomez, Attorney General Matthew Gregory, and Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela during the proclamation of the friendship week between the CNMI and the Philippines in June.



## BONDING MOMENT

Philippine Overseas Labor Office and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration management and staff visit the Suicide Cliff one weekend in June.



## GARAGE SALE

Overseas Workers Welfare Administration – Overseas Filipino Workers Support Group hold a two-weekend garage sale at the Minatchom Atdao in Oleai in May.



## HONORED GUESTS

Office of the Insular Affairs field representative R. Jeffrey Schorr, second from left, with wife Hannah, left, are joined by radio station manager Harry Blalock and Philippine Consul General Wilfredo DL. Maximo during one of the POLO's events in June.

## UPAA GIRL POWER

Women officers and members of the University of the Philippines Alumni Association NMI Chapter are all smiles during a recent election of officers.

**Maharlika**  
PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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